



## Senate

General Assembly

**File No. 161**

January Session, 2017

Substitute Senate Bill No. 894

*Senate, March 22, 2017*

The Committee on Children reported through SEN. MOORE, M. of the 22nd Dist. and SEN. SUZIO of the 13th Dist., Chairpersons of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

### **AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE STATE OVERSIGHT COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 17a-4 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2017*):

3 (a) There shall be a State [Advisory] Oversight Council on Children  
4 and Families which shall consist of [nineteen members as follows: (1)  
5 Thirteen members appointed by the Governor, including two persons  
6 who are child care professionals, two persons eighteen to twenty-five  
7 years of age, inclusive, served by the Department of Children and  
8 Families, one child psychiatrist licensed to practice medicine in this  
9 state and one attorney who has expertise in legal issues related to  
10 children and youth and seven persons who shall be representative of  
11 young persons, parents and others interested in the delivery of services  
12 to children and youths, including child protection, behavioral health,  
13 juvenile justice and prevention services, at least four of whom shall be

14 parents, foster parents or family members of children who have  
15 received, or are receiving, behavioral health services, child welfare  
16 services or juvenile services; and (2)] the following members: (1) Two  
17 members appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives,  
18 one of whom shall have expertise in providing services through the  
19 family assessment response program operated by the Department of  
20 Children and Families, and one of whom shall be an advocate for  
21 children and youths; (2) two members appointed by the president pro  
22 tempore of the Senate, one of whom shall have expertise in providing  
23 behavioral health services to children and youths served by the  
24 Department of Children and Families, and one of whom shall be a  
25 parent, foster parent or family member of a child or youth who has  
26 received, or is receiving, behavioral health services, child welfare  
27 services or juvenile services; (3) two members appointed by the  
28 majority leader of the House of Representatives, one of whom shall be  
29 between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five and a former recipient of  
30 in-home services or supervision provided by the Department of  
31 Children and Families, and one of whom shall be a parent, foster  
32 parent or family member of a child or youth who has received, or is  
33 receiving, behavioral health services, child welfare services or juvenile  
34 services; (4) two members appointed by the majority leader of the  
35 Senate, one of whom shall be a child psychiatrist licensed to practice  
36 medicine in this state, and one of whom shall be a parent, foster parent  
37 or family member of a child or youth who has received, or is receiving,  
38 behavioral health services, child welfare services or juvenile services;  
39 (5) two members appointed by the minority leader of the House of  
40 Representatives, one of whom shall be between the ages of eighteen  
41 and twenty-five and a former foster child, and one of whom shall be a  
42 parent, foster parent or family member of a child or youth who has  
43 received, or is receiving, behavioral health services, child welfare  
44 services or juvenile services; (6) two members appointed by the  
45 minority leader of the Senate, one of whom shall be an attorney with  
46 expertise in legal issues related to children and youths, and one of  
47 whom shall be an advocate for children and youths; (7) the  
48 chairpersons and ranking members of the joint standing committees of

49 the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to  
50 children, appropriations, human services and the judiciary, or such  
51 chairpersons' and ranking members' designees; (8) the Child Advocate;  
52 (9) the Commissioner of Children and Families, who shall be a  
53 nonvoting ex-officio member of the council and shall attend its  
54 meetings; (10) the executive director of the Court Support Services  
55 Division of the Judicial Branch, or the executive director's designee;  
56 (11) a judge of the superior court for juvenile matters, appointed by the  
57 Chief Justice; (12) the Chief Public Defender, or the Chief Public  
58 Defender's designee; and (13) six members representing the regional  
59 advisory councils established pursuant to section 17a-30, who shall be  
60 nonvoting ex-officio members of the council and shall attend its  
61 meetings, appointed one each by the members of each council. On and  
62 after [October 1, 2014] July 1, 2017, no more than half the members of  
63 the council shall be persons who receive income from a private  
64 practice or any public or private agency that delivers mental health,  
65 substance abuse, child abuse prevention and treatment, child welfare  
66 [services] or juvenile services. Members of the council shall serve  
67 without compensation, except for necessary expenses incurred in the  
68 performance of their duties. The Department of Children and Families  
69 shall provide the council with funding to facilitate the participation of  
70 those members representing families and youth, as well as for other  
71 administrative support services. Members shall serve on the council  
72 for terms of two years each and no member shall serve for more than  
73 three consecutive terms. [The commissioner shall be an ex-officio  
74 member of the council without vote and shall attend its meetings.] Any  
75 member who fails to attend three consecutive meetings or fifty per cent  
76 of all meetings during any calendar year shall be deemed to have  
77 resigned. The council shall elect [a chairperson and vice-chairperson to  
78 act in the chairperson's absence] two chairpersons from among its  
79 members.

80 (b) The [council] State Oversight Council on Children and Families  
81 shall meet [quarterly] bimonthly, and more often upon the call of the  
82 [chair] chairpersons or a majority of the members. The council's  
83 meetings shall be held at locations that facilitate participation by

84 members of the public, and its agenda and minutes shall be posted on  
85 the [department's] Department of Children and Families' Internet web  
86 site. A majority of the members in office, but not less than six  
87 members, shall constitute a quorum. The council shall have complete  
88 access to all records of the institutions and facilities of the department  
89 in furtherance of its duties, while at all times protecting the right of  
90 privacy of all individuals involved, as provided in section 17a-28.

91 (c) The duties of the [council] State Oversight Council on Children  
92 and Families shall be to: (1) [Recommend to the commissioner]  
93 Monitor and evaluate the policies and programs of the Department of  
94 Children and Families; (2) recommend to the Commissioner of  
95 Children and Families and the joint standing committee of the General  
96 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children policies,  
97 programs, legislation or other matters which will improve services for  
98 children and youths, including behavioral health services; [(2)] (3)  
99 annually review and advise [the] said commissioner and the joint  
100 standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of  
101 matters relating to appropriations and children regarding the  
102 proposed budget; [(3)] (4) interpret to the community at large the  
103 policies, duties and programs of the department; [(4) issue any reports  
104 it deems necessary to the Governor and the Commissioner of Children  
105 and Families;] (5) assist in the development of and review and  
106 comment on the strategic plan developed by [the] such department  
107 pursuant to subsection (b) of section 17a-3, as amended by this act; (6)  
108 receive on a quarterly basis from [the] said commissioner a status  
109 report on [the] such department's progress in carrying out the strategic  
110 plan; (7) independently monitor [the] such department's progress in  
111 achieving its goals as expressed in the strategic plan; and (8) offer  
112 assistance and provide an outside perspective to [the] such department  
113 so that it may [be able to] achieve the goals expressed in the strategic  
114 plan.

115 (d) Not later than January 1, 2018, and annually thereafter, the State  
116 Oversight Council on Children and Families shall submit a report, in  
117 accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint standing

118 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters  
119 relating to children. Such report shall include findings and  
120 recommendations regarding (1) the implementation of the Department  
121 of Children and Families' family assessment response program,  
122 focusing on (A) the effectiveness of initial risk assessments, including  
123 the training of department personnel tasked with making such  
124 assessments and the consistency and adequacy of the application of  
125 risk assessment tools by such personnel, (B) the appropriateness of  
126 referrals made to the program, and (C) such department's policies  
127 regarding monitoring and reporting outcomes for children, youths and  
128 families involved in the program; (2) such department's foster care and  
129 kinship placement programs, including (A) licensing policies and  
130 practices and statutory and regulatory compliance with such policies  
131 and practices, (B) the initial risk assessment, screening and approval of  
132 prospective foster parents and kinship placements, and (C) such  
133 department's policies regarding identifying and mitigating risks to  
134 children and youths in foster care and kinship placements and  
135 methods of monitoring and reporting on outcomes; (3) such  
136 department's risk assessment tools, focusing on such tools' reliability  
137 and efficacy and the consistency of such tools' application by  
138 department personnel; (4) the use of voluntary agreements with the  
139 parents and guardians of children and youths who are at risk for or are  
140 victims of abuse or neglect, focusing on the appropriateness of the use  
141 of such agreements, whether such agreements address and mitigate  
142 identified risks and how compliance with such agreements is  
143 monitored and reported by such department; and (5) such  
144 department's policies and practices regarding responding to the  
145 suspected abuse or neglect of vulnerable children, including, but not  
146 limited to, children from birth to age three and children with severe  
147 developmental or physical disabilities and whether such policies and  
148 practices do or should include the implementation of expedited and  
149 heightened risk assessment and case supervision, frequent visitation  
150 and contacts by department personnel and increased documentation  
151 and reporting of such cases. Such report shall also include information  
152 regarding activities undertaken by the council in furtherance of its

153 duties pursuant to subsection (c) of this section and any findings and  
154 recommendations that arise in the course of undertaking such duties.

155 (e) Not later than November 1, 2019, and annually thereafter, the  
156 joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance  
157 of matters relating to children shall make a presentation to the State  
158 Oversight Council on Children and Families regarding the annual  
159 report card maintained pursuant to section 2-53m. On and after  
160 January 1, 2020, recommendations contained in any report submitted  
161 by the council pursuant to subsection (d) of this section shall take into  
162 consideration the findings of such report card.

163 (f) Not later than thirty days after receipt of the report submitted  
164 pursuant to subsection (d) of this section, the joint standing committee  
165 of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to  
166 children, shall, in conjunction with the chairpersons of the State  
167 Oversight Council on Children and Families, hold an informational  
168 hearing on such report.

169 Sec. 2. Subsection (f) of section 2c-2h of the general statutes is  
170 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*  
171 *1, 2017*):

172 (f) Not later than July 1, 2019, and not later than every ten years  
173 thereafter, the joint standing committee of the General Assembly  
174 having cognizance of any of the following governmental entities or  
175 programs shall conduct a review of the applicable entity or program in  
176 accordance with the provisions of section 2c-3:

177 (1) Board of Examiners of Psychologists, established under section  
178 20-186;

179 (2) State Dental Commission, established under section 20-103a;

180 (3) State Board of Examiners for Professional Engineers and Land  
181 Surveyors, established under section 20-300;

182 (4) Heating, Piping, Cooling and Sheet Metal Work Board,

183 established under section 20-331;

184 (5) [Advisory] State Oversight Council on Children and Families,  
185 established under section 17a-4, as amended by this act;

186 (6) Regulation of speech and language pathologists pursuant to  
187 chapter 399;

188 (7) Connecticut Siting Council, established under section 16-50j; and

189 (8) Advisory Council for Special Education, established under  
190 section 10-76i.

191 Sec. 3. Section 17a-1 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
192 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2017*):

193 As used in sections 17a-1 to 17a-26, inclusive, as amended by this  
194 act, 17a-28 to 17a-49, inclusive, 17a-127 and 46b-120, unless otherwise  
195 provided in said sections:

196 (1) "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Children and  
197 Families;

198 (2) "Council" means the State [Advisory] Oversight Council on  
199 Children and Families;

200 (3) "Advisory committee" means the Children's Behavioral Health  
201 Advisory Committee;

202 (4) "Department" means the Department of Children and Families;

203 (5) "Child" means a child, as defined in section 46b-120;

204 (6) "Youth" means a youth, as defined in section 46b-120;

205 (7) "Delinquent child" means a child convicted of a delinquent act,  
206 as defined in section 46b-120;

207 (8) "Child or youth with behavioral health needs" means a child or  
208 youth who is suffering from one or more mental disorders as defined

209 in the most recent edition of the American Psychiatric Association's  
210 "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders";

211 (9) "Individual service plan" means a written plan to access  
212 specialized, coordinated and integrated care for a child or youth with  
213 complex behavioral health service needs that is designed to meet the  
214 needs of the child or youth and his or her family and may include,  
215 when appropriate (A) an assessment of the individual needs of the  
216 child or youth, (B) an identification of service needs, (C) an  
217 identification of services that are currently being provided, (D) an  
218 identification of opportunities for full participation by parents or  
219 emancipated minors, (E) a reintegration plan when an out-of-home  
220 placement is made or recommended, (F) an identification of criteria for  
221 evaluating the effectiveness and appropriateness of such plan, and (G)  
222 coordination of the individual service plan with any educational  
223 services provided to the child or youth. The plan shall be subject to  
224 review at least every six months or upon reasonable request by the  
225 parent based on a changed circumstance, and be approved, in writing,  
226 by the parents, guardian of a child or youth and emancipated minors;

227 (10) "Family" means a child or youth with behavioral health needs  
228 and (A) one or more biological or adoptive parents, except for a parent  
229 whose parental rights have been terminated, (B) one or more persons  
230 to whom legal custody or guardianship has been given, or (C) one or  
231 more adults who have a primary responsibility for providing  
232 continuous care to such child or youth;

233 (11) "Parent" means a biological or adoptive parent, except a parent  
234 whose parental rights have been terminated;

235 (12) "Guardian" means a person who has a judicially created  
236 relationship between a child or youth and such person that is intended  
237 to be permanent and self-sustaining as evidenced by the transfer to  
238 such person of the following parental rights with respect to the child or  
239 youth: (A) The obligation of care and control; (B) the authority to make  
240 major decisions affecting the child's or youth's welfare, including, but  
241 not limited to, consent determinations regarding marriage, enlistment



242 in the armed forces and major medical, psychiatric or surgical  
243 treatment; (C) the obligation of protection of the child or youth; (D) the  
244 obligation to provide access to education; and (E) custody of the child  
245 or youth;

246 (13) "Serious emotional disturbance" and "seriously emotionally  
247 disturbed" means, with regard to a child or youth, that the child or  
248 youth (A) has a range of diagnosable mental, behavioral or emotional  
249 disorders of sufficient duration to meet diagnostic criteria specified in  
250 the most recent edition of the American Psychiatric Association's  
251 "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders", and (B)  
252 exhibits behaviors that substantially interfere with or limit the child's  
253 or youth's ability to function in the family, school or community and  
254 are not a temporary response to a stressful situation;

255 (14) "Child or youth with complex behavioral health service needs"  
256 means a child or youth with behavioral health needs who needs  
257 specialized, coordinated behavioral health services;

258 (15) "Transition services" means services in the areas of education,  
259 employment, housing and community living designed to assist a youth  
260 with a serious emotional disturbance who is transitioning into  
261 adulthood; and

262 (16) "Community collaborative" means a local consortium of public  
263 and private health care providers, parents and guardians of children  
264 with behavioral health needs and service and education agencies that  
265 have organized to develop coordinated comprehensive community  
266 resources for children or youths with complex behavioral health  
267 service needs and their families in accordance with principles and  
268 goals of Connecticut Community KidCare.

269 Sec. 4. Subsection (b) of section 17a-3 of the general statutes is  
270 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*  
271 *1, 2017*):

272 (b) (1) The department, with the assistance of the State [Advisory]

273 Oversight Council on Children and Families, and in consultation with  
274 representatives of the children and families served by the department,  
275 providers of services to children and families, advocates, and others  
276 interested in the well-being of children and families in this state, shall  
277 develop and regularly update a single, comprehensive strategic plan  
278 for meeting the needs of children and families served by the  
279 department. In developing and updating the strategic plan, the  
280 department shall identify and define agency goals and indicators of  
281 progress, including benchmarks, in achieving such goals. The strategic  
282 plan shall include, but not be limited to: (A) The department's mission  
283 statement; (B) the expected results for the department and each of its  
284 mandated areas of responsibility; (C) a schedule of action steps and a  
285 time frame for achieving such results and fulfilling the department's  
286 mission that includes strategies for working with other state agencies  
287 to leverage resources and coordinate service delivery; (D) priorities for  
288 services and estimates of the funding and other resources necessary to  
289 carry them out; (E) standards for programs and services that are based  
290 on research-based best practices, when available; and (F) relevant  
291 measures of performance.

292 (2) The department shall begin the strategic planning process on  
293 July 1, 2009. The department shall hold regional meetings on the plan  
294 to ensure public input and shall post the plan and the plan's updates  
295 and progress reports on the department's web site. The department  
296 shall submit the strategic plan to the State [Advisory] Oversight  
297 Council on Children and Families for review and comment prior to its  
298 final submission to the General Assembly and the Governor. On or  
299 before July 1, 2010, the department shall submit the strategic plan, in  
300 accordance with section 11-4a, to the General Assembly and the  
301 Governor.

302 (3) The commissioner shall track and report on progress in  
303 achieving the strategic plan's goals not later than October 1, 2010, and  
304 quarterly thereafter, to said State [Advisory Council] Oversight  
305 Council on Children and Families. The commissioner shall submit a  
306 status report on progress in achieving the results in the strategic plan,

307 in accordance with section 11-4a, not later than July 1, 2011, and  
308 annually thereafter to the General Assembly, the joint standing  
309 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters  
310 relating to children and the Governor.

311 Sec. 5. Subsections (e) and (f) of section 17a-4a of the general statutes  
312 are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*  
313 *July 1, 2017*):

314 (e) Not later than October first of each year, the advisory committee  
315 shall submit a status report on local systems of care and practice  
316 standards for state-funded behavioral health programs to the  
317 Commissioner of Children and Families and the State [Advisory]  
318 Oversight Council on Children and Families.

319 (f) Not later than October first of each odd-numbered year, the  
320 advisory committee shall submit recommendations concerning the  
321 provision of behavioral health services for all children in the state to  
322 the Commissioner of Children and Families and the State [Advisory]  
323 Oversight Council on Children and Families. The recommendations  
324 shall address, but shall not be limited to, the following: (1) The target  
325 population for children with behavioral health needs, and assessment  
326 and benefit options for children with such needs; (2) the  
327 appropriateness and quality of care for children with behavioral health  
328 needs; (3) the coordination of behavioral health services provided  
329 under the HUSKY Health program with services provided by other  
330 publicly-funded programs; (4) performance standards for preventive  
331 services, family supports and emergency service training programs; (5)  
332 assessments of community-based and residential care programs; (6)  
333 outcome measurements by reviewing provider practice; and (7) a  
334 medication protocol and standards for the monitoring of medication  
335 and after-care programs.

336 Sec. 6. Subsection (m) of section 17a-6 of the general statutes is  
337 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*  
338 *1, 2017*):

339 (m) Submit to the [state advisory council] State Oversight Council  
340 on Children and Families for its comment proposals for new policies or  
341 programs and the proposed budget for the department;

342 Sec. 7. Section 17a-9 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
343 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2017*):

344 (a) The commissioner shall appoint, after consultation with the  
345 [state advisory council] State Oversight Council on Children and  
346 Families, and may remove in a like manner, two deputy  
347 commissioners who shall be in the unclassified service. The deputy  
348 commissioner for program services shall be a clinically competent  
349 professional person experienced in one or more fields of children's  
350 services and in the administration of such services, and shall be  
351 responsible for the supervision of all clinical treatment and program  
352 services of the department. The deputy commissioner of  
353 administrative services shall have experience in business or  
354 institutional administration and shall be responsible for the  
355 organizational and general administrative services of the department.

356 (b) The commissioner shall appoint, after consultation with the  
357 [state advisory council] State Oversight Council on Children and  
358 Families, and may remove in like manner, not more than two program  
359 directors who shall be in the unclassified service, provided the title or  
360 duties of any director appointed pursuant to this subsection may be  
361 changed as the commissioner deems necessary after consultation with  
362 the state advisory council. Such directors may oversee community  
363 programs and services and the operation of institutions and facilities.

364 (c) The commissioner shall, in accordance with chapter 67 and after  
365 consultation with the [state advisory council] State Oversight Council  
366 on Children and Families, appoint the administrative heads of all of  
367 the institutions and facilities transferred to the department and such  
368 other institutions and facilities as now are or hereafter may be  
369 established by or transferred to the department. Such administrative  
370 heads shall have skill and experience in the administration of  
371 children's services and shall manage their institutions and facilities in

372 accordance with the regulations and orders of the commissioner.

373 (d) The commissioner shall, after consultation with the [state  
374 advisory council] State Oversight Council on Children and Families,  
375 appoint and may remove in a like manner, up to six regional directors  
376 who shall be in the unclassified service. Each regional director shall  
377 have skill and experience in the field of children's services and in the  
378 administration of such services. Each regional director shall be subject  
379 to the direction of the commissioner and shall be responsible for the  
380 operation and administration of services provided or funded by the  
381 department in the regions created by the commissioner pursuant to  
382 subsection (a) of section 17a-30.

383 Sec. 8. Section 17a-32a of the general statutes is repealed and the  
384 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2017*):

385 (a) The facilities that come under the jurisdiction of the Department  
386 of Children and Families, as enumerated in section 17a-32, shall submit  
387 an annual report to the State [Advisory] Oversight Council on  
388 Children and Families and to their respective advisory groups,  
389 established pursuant to subsection (b) of section 17a-6. The report shall  
390 include, but not be limited to: (1) Aggregate profiles of the residents;  
391 (2) a description of and update on major initiatives; (3) key outcome  
392 indicators and results; (4) costs associated with operating the facility;  
393 and (5) a description of educational, vocational and literacy programs,  
394 and behavioral, treatment and other services available to the residents  
395 and their outcomes. Each report submitted pursuant to this subsection  
396 shall be posted on the department's web site.

397 (b) Such advisory groups shall respond to their facility's annual  
398 report, submitted pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, and  
399 provide any recommendations for improvement or enhancement that  
400 they deem necessary.

401 (c) The Department of Children and Families shall serve as  
402 administrative staff of such advisory groups.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2017</i>	17a-4
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2017</i>	2c-2h(f)
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2017</i>	17a-1
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2017</i>	17a-3(b)
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2017</i>	17a-4a(e) and (f)
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2017</i>	17a-6(m)
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2017</i>	17a-9
Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2017</i>	17a-32a

**Statement of Legislative Commissioners:**

In Section 1(a), "October 1," was bracketed and "July 1," was inserted for internal consistency, and "services" was bracketed for clarity.

**KID***Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

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**OFA Fiscal Note****State Impact:**

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 18 \$	FY 19 \$
Various State Agencies	GF - Potential Cost	Less than \$1,000	Less than \$1,000

Note: GF=General Fund

**Municipal Impact:** None

**Explanation**

There may be a cost of less than \$1,000 annually to those agencies participating in the State Oversight Council to reimburse legislators and agency staff for mileage expenses, currently at 53.5 cents/mile.

**The Out Years**

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

**OLR Bill Analysis****sSB 894*****AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE STATE OVERSIGHT COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.*****SUMMARY**

This bill renames the State Advisory Council on Children and Families as the State Oversight Council on Children and Families and modifies the council's membership by (1) eliminating the governor's 13 appointees and requiring legislative leaders to appoint 12 members with similar qualifications and (2) doubling the council membership from 19 to 38 members. It also requires the committee to increase, from quarterly to bimonthly, how frequently it meets.

In addition to the council's current responsibilities, the bill requires it to monitor and evaluate DCF's policies and programs. It also requires the council to recommend (1) to the Children's Committee any programs, legislation, or other matters that will improve services for children and youths, in addition to making such recommendations to the DCF commissioner as required currently, and (2) related policies to both the committee and the commissioner.

The bill eliminates a requirement that the council issue any reports it deems necessary to the governor and DCF commissioner. Instead, starting by January 1, 2018, the council must begin annually reporting to the Children's Committee on its activities in furtherance of its duties and its findings and recommendations related to specific DCF programs, policies, and practices. The bill requires the committee, within 30 days of receiving the report and in conjunction with the council chairs, to hold an informational hearing on the report.

The bill also (1) requires the Children's Committee, by November 1, 2019, to begin annually presenting to the council on the Children's



Report Card (see BACKGROUND); (2) requires the council, by January 1, 2020, to take into consideration the report card findings when reporting its recommendations; and (3) makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2017

### **COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP**

The bill adds the following members to the council:

1. the chairs and ranking members of the Appropriations, Children's, Human Services, and Judiciary committees;
2. the child advocate;
3. the Court Support Services Division executive director or his designee;
4. the Chief Public Defender or her designee;
5. a juvenile court judge appointed by the State Supreme Court Chief Justice; and
6. 12 legislative appointees, as Table 1 shows.

**Table 1: Legislative Appointments**

Appointing Authority	Number of Appointments	Qualifications
House Speaker	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>person with expertise providing services through the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) family assessment response program</li> <li>child and youth advocate</li> </ul>
Senate President Pro Tempore	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>person with expertise providing behavioral health services to children and youth served by DCF</li> <li>parent, foster parent, or family member of a child or youth who is receiving or has received behavioral health, child welfare, or juvenile services</li> </ul>
House majority leader	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>former recipient of DCF in-home services or supervision between age 18 and 25</li> <li>parent, foster parent, or family member of</li> </ul>

		a child or youth who is receiving or has received behavioral health, child welfare, or juvenile services
Senate majority leader	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• licensed child psychiatrist</li> <li>• parent, foster parent, or family member of a child or youth who is receiving or has received behavioral health, child welfare, or juvenile services</li> </ul>
House minority leader	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• former foster child between age 18 and 25</li> <li>• parent, foster parent, or family member of a child or youth who is receiving or has received behavioral health, child welfare, or juvenile services</li> </ul>
Senate minority leader	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attorney with expertise in child and youth legal issues</li> <li>• child and youth advocate</li> </ul>

The bill makes the six current council members who represent regional advisory councils nonvoting ex-officio members and requires them to attend all the council's meetings. As under current law, (1) the DCF commissioner is also a nonvoting ex-officio member who must attend all meetings and (2) no more than half the council members may be people who receive income from a private practice or public or private agency that delivers mental health, substance abuse, child abuse prevention and treatment, child welfare, or juvenile services.

Currently, the council must select from among its members a (1) chairperson and (2) vice-chairperson to act in his or her absence. The bill instead requires the council to select two chairpersons.

## REPORT REQUIREMENTS

The council must include in its annual report to the Children's Committee its findings and recommendations related to various aspects of DCF's policies and practices, as described below.

### ***Family Assessment Response (FAR) Program***

The council must provide findings and recommendations on DCF's implementation of the program, focusing on:

1. the effectiveness of initial risk assessments, including training of DCF personnel tasked with making assessments and the

consistency and adequacy of the personnel's risk assessment tool use;

2. the appropriateness of program referrals; and
3. DCF's policies regarding monitoring and reporting outcomes for children, youth, and families involved in the program.

### ***DCF's Foster Care and Kinship Programs***

The council must provide findings and recommendations on foster care and kinship programs, including:

1. licensing policies and practices and related statutory and regulatory compliance;
2. the initial risk assessment, screening, and approval of prospective foster parents and kinship placements;
3. DCF's policies on identifying and migrating risks to children and youths in these placements; and
4. methods of monitoring and reporting on outcomes.

### ***Voluntary Agreements***

The council must provide findings and recommendations on voluntary agreements with parents and guardians of children and youth who are, or are at risk of being, abuse or neglect victims, focusing on:

1. the appropriateness of using such agreements;
2. whether the agreements address and mitigate identified risks; and
3. how DCF monitors and reports compliance with such agreements.

### ***Response to Alleged Abuse or Neglect of Vulnerable Children***

The council must provide findings and recommendations on DCF's

policies and practices on responding to abuse and neglect allegations that pertain to children birth to age three or who have severe developmental or physical disabilities and whether they do or should include:

1. implementation of expedited and heightened risk assessment and case supervision,
2. frequent DCF personnel visitation and contacts, and
3. increased documentation and reporting of such cases.

### ***Risk Assessment Tools***

The council must additionally provide findings and recommendations on DCF's risk assessment tools, focusing on the reliability, efficacy, and consistency of their application by DCF personnel.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Children's Report Card***

By law, the Children's Committee, in collaboration with the Offices of Fiscal Analysis and Legislative Research and the Commission on Women, Children, and Seniors must maintain an annual report card that evaluates the progress of state policies and programs in promoting the result that all Connecticut children grow up in a stable living environment, safe, healthy, and ready to lead productive lives. The report must use data and primary indicators to measure the progress towards these goals in a variety of areas (e.g., state-wide rates of child abuse and poverty)(CGS § 2-53m).

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Committee on Children

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 12 Nay 0 (03/07/2017)